Tips for Completing NFIRS 5.0 Modules

♦ **Updated December 2004**

- **NFIRS CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGES** ♦

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- **NFIRS 5.0 HELP DESK** – 1-888-382-3827 or **FEMA-nfirshelp@dhs.gov**

- **NFIRS 5.0 data should be submitted at least once a month to the State Fire Marshal.**
  Example: January reports should be sent to the state by the 15th of February; February reports by the 15th of March etc. Reports can also be sent on a daily basis. <u>Do not wait</u> to send all your reports at the end of the year.

  NOTE: One of the eligibility requirements for receiving federal grant money and/or fire investigation training is that fire departments participate in NFIRS.

- **Password Requirement.** If your department has been activated to use the NFIRS system, your password needs to be changed to between 8 and 12 characters, with at least one character being numeric. This requirement applies to both users of the USFA Data Entry Tool and the Bulk Import Utility.

- **Automatic User Account Deactivation.** To meet FEMA security requirements for protection of application and information access, NFIRS 5.0 includes a daily account "last login" check and automatic user account deactivation for accounts that have not been accessed for at least 60 days. To be reactivated, you must contact the State Program Manager. **When the account status is reset, the user must login before the next 4:30 A.M. hour (Eastern Standard Time).**

- **HIPAA - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996**
  It is the United States Fire Administration's view that 49 U.S.C. 2208, which provides for the collection of data, among other things, the "number of injuries and deaths resulting from fires, including the maximum available information on the specific causes and nature of such injuries and deaths, and information on property losses," constitutes a law providing for reporting of disease or injury (and arguably public health surveillance, investigation and intervention) under Section 1178 of HIPAA. Consequently, it is believed that provision of this information to NFIRS would not be a violation of HIPAA and therefore, will continue to collect the existing data elements.

- **The Incident Type is the actual situation emergency personnel find on the scene** when they arrive, but if a more serious condition developed after the fire department's arrival on the scene, that incident type should be reported. For incidents involving fire and hazardous materials or fire and EMS, use the fire codes. In general, use the lowest numbered series that applies to the incident. This identifies the various types of incidents to which the fire department responds. Be very specific in what is entered in the Incident Type. The FIRE OTHER =100 should only be used if no other Incident Type describes the

situation. A list of Incident Types is listed in the Quick Reference Guide. You will have opportunity to describe multiple actions taken later in the report.

- **All civilian *fire* casualties are required to be reported to the state fire marshal** by using the NFIRS-4 Civilian Fire Casualty Module. A *fire casualty* is a person who is injured or killed as a result of a fire, and includes injuries or deaths from natural or accidental causes sustained while involved in the activities of fire control, attempting rescue, or escaping from the dangers of the fire. Fires include incident types 100-199. When a victim dies after the original fire incident has been filed with the state, a CHANGE transaction must be submitted for that incident changing the injury to a death.

    All other civilian casualties **MAY** be reported by using the EMS Module. However, this is not mandatory.

    If a civilian is injured in a "non-fire" incident (such as a demonstration or training fire), no NFIRS report is required. **However**, an amendment to the Michigan Fire Prevention Code, Act 207, P.A. 1941 requires that the chief of a fire department in charge of a demonstration or training fire immediately notify the State Fire Marshal of the death or injury of a civilian which results from a "non-fire" incident.

- **The Fire Service Casualty Module is required for ANY firefighter injury**, regardless of whether it is associated with a response, training, or working on trucks in the station, etc.

- **The Estimated Dollar Losses & Values field (G2) should be filled out for all fires**. Optional for non-fires. This figure is a rough estimation of the total loss to the structure and contents, in terms of the cost of replacement in like kind and quantity. It should include contents damaged by fire, smoke, water, and overhaul. The dollar loss estimation helps illustrate the magnitude of the fire problem in Michigan and identifies types of situations where high monetary losses are common. This information helps target fire prevention programs.

- **Location of Incident -** Basic Module, Field B. When either "Directions" or "Intersection" is selected for the location of an incident, one street name should be entered on the "Street or Highway" line and the directions or cross street should be entered on the "Cross Street or Directions" line. If this procedure is not followed, the incident will be invalid.

- **Small Grass Fires -** Abbreviated reporting for small grass fires was a feature of the NFIRS 5.0 system that *did not* make it into the final release version. The Incident Type for "small grass fire" was dropped during the process of bringing NFIRS 5.0 codes more in line with the existing NFPA 901 coding scheme. Therefore, **a Fire Module always needs to be completed for a grass fire**.

- **Multiple Grass Fires set by a single cause**, occurring in the same jurisdiction, and within the same property use, should be coded as one fire with multiple ignitions. If such fires continue to the next fire district, the neighboring district should make out a similar report, reporting all their fires within the same property use as a single fire.

- **Chimney Fires** - Fires in and confined to a **chimney or flue** should be coded as Incident Type 114. Fires that extend beyond the chimney should be coded as Incident Type 111 or 112. The Fire Module is completed for incidents involving a non-contained fire or a contained fire (Incident type 113-118) if it has associated injuries, deaths or property loss.

- **Clothes Dryer Fires** - All dryer fires are considered building fires. Some may occur in mobile property used as a structure, such as manufactured housing (the 120 series) and it is possible to have a dryer fire on a ship. On the Basic Module, the dollar loss would be for "contents" only. A Fire Module should be completed, and the "Equipment Involved in Ignition" section (including the make and model of the dryer) should be coded as an 811.

- **Clandestine Drug Labs** –This is a combination of property use (Basic Module, Block J) and On-Site Materials (Fire Module, Block C). For example, a clandestine drug lab in a single family home would be coded: Single Family Home-Basic Module, Block J – 419 (1 or 2 family dwelling), Fire Module, Section B1 – 1 Unit. On-Site Materials-Fire Module, Block C –545 (Illegal Drugs), check Box "2" for "Processing or Manufacturing."

If reportable quantities of hazardous materials are present, then a Hazardous Materials Module should also be completed. A hazardous materials incident not involving a fire would not capture the property details, specifically the on-site materials which are collected in the Fire Module. The combination of property use (Basic Module, Block J) and Hazmat ID (NFIRS-7, Block B) may identify a clandestine drug lab.

- **Mulch Fires** should be captured as Incident Type 142 – Brush or brush and grass mixture, including ground fuels lying on or immediately above the ground, such as roots, dead leaves, fine dead wood and downed logs. The item first ignited would be 72 – light vegetation, not crop, including grass, leaves, needles, chaff, mulch and compost.

- **Training Fires** - Approved-training fires should be coded as Incident Type 632 (Prescribed Fire). Included are fires ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives and have a written, approved prescribed fire plan prior to ignition. **A training fire should not be classified as a hostile fire (100-199).**

- **Vehicle Fires** - A vehicle is always considered a "piece of equipment." If a vehicle is located in or on a building or other structure it would be coded as a vehicle fire, **unless** the structure becomes involved, then it would be coded as a structure fire. Once the incident is coded as a structure fire, the vehicle(s) would be considered contents. The Remarks Section would be used to identify the vehicles involved.

  If an incident is coded as a vehicle fire and the vehicle was involved in ignition, it would be noted under the mobile property section, and the make and model would be captured there.

- **Vehicle fire exposure** - If a vehicle parked in a parking ramp catches fire and two other vehicles with separate individual owners, catch fire from the first vehicle, treat each of the two other vehicles as a separate exposure. If, instead, a fleet of vehicles is involved and they all have the same corporate owner then they may all be treated as a single exposure.

- **The Basic Module is required** for **all** incidents.

- **On the Basic Module**, the 100 series incident type codes include all fires. **Included are fires out on arrival, gas vapor explosions** (with extremely rapid combustion).

- **Basic Module, Field C – Incident Type**. This is the actual situation that emergency personnel found on the scene when they arrived. **The incident type reported is not always the same as the incident type initially dispatched.**

- **Cancelled enroute** - If your fire department is dispatched and **cancelled enroute**, the Incident Type should be 611, the Arrival Time should be the same as Cleared Time, and the Incident Action Taken should be 93 (cancelled enroute).

- **If Incident Type = 571** (stand by) and if Aid Given or Received = codes 3, 4 or 5, then only the information on the Basic module through Block D (Aid Given or Received) needs to be completed by the department giving aid. The rest of the Basic Module and the other modules as applicable are optional.

- **If Incident Type** = any other Incident Type than 571 and if Aid Given or Received = codes 3, 4 or 5, and the "THEIR FDID" information in Block D is entered, then only the information on the Basic Module through block G1 (Resources). However, if there is a fire fighter casualty, then Block H1 on the Basic Module must be checked and a Fire Fighter Casualty Module completed by the department giving aid. The remainder of the Basic module and any other modules associated with the incident may be optionally completed but are not required. The information not captured by the department giving aid will be captured by the department that received aid for that incident.

- **Aid Giving Departments and Aid Receiving Departments** *always* track their own Fire Service casualties separately. If a Fire Service Casualty occurs in a department giving aid, they should also complete the H1 Casualties block on the Basic Module in addition to the Fire Service Casualty Module.

- **Aid Given or Received** - The department receiving aid is responsible for tracking and entering all of the civilian casualty information for the incident.

- **Aid Given -** If aid is given (codes 3, 4 or 5), then only the information on the Basic module through block G1 (Resources) must be completed by the department giving aid **unless** a fire service casualty also occurs, then the giving department must also complete the Fire Service casualty module. The remainder of the Basic module and any other modules associated with the incident may be optionally completed but are not required. The information not captured by the department giving aid is captured by the department that received aid for that incident.

- **On the Basic Module** (E1) Dates and Times are *__required__.* The exact month, day, year, and time of day (hour, minute) when the alarm was received by the fire department. The 24-hour clock should be used (0000-2359). 0000 signifies the start of a new day.

- **On the Basic Module** (G1) Resources. Definition: The **total** number of fire department personnel and apparatus (suppression, EMS, other) that responded to the incident. This includes all fire and EMS personnel assigned to the incident whether they arrived at the scene or were canceled before arrival. THIS FIELD SHOULD NOT BE USED TO IDENTIFY THE NUMBER ASSIGNED TO A PARTICULAR APPARATUS SUCH AS "521" OR "89".

- **On the Structure Module** (I4) Main Floor Size is a **required** field. Enter the size of the main floor of the building involved either by indicating the total square feet (in the first blank) or by entering the length and width in feet (in the second blank).

- **The Fire Module** is **always** required for the following incident types with no exceptions: 110-112, 120-138, 161-164 (160 is not included here because that code can be a wildland fire).

- **The Fire Module** is **never** allowed for: 200-911.

- **The Fire Module** is **optional** for the following incident types: 113-118, 150-155.

- **If the Wildland Module is not used** in place of the Fire Module, **then the Fire Module must be completed for incident types**: 140-143, 160, 170-173.

- **The Wildland Module** is optional for Incident Types: 561, 631, 632.

- **The Wildland Module** is never allowed for Incident Types: 100-138, 150-155, 161-164, 200-555, 571-621, 641-911.

- **The Structure Fire Module** is **always** required for incident types: 111-112, 120-123.
  Note: Only the Structure type element is required on the Structure Module for code 112, the rest of the module is optional.

- **The Structure Fire Module** is **never** allowed for incident types: 130-173.

- **The Structure Fire Module** is optional for Incident Types: 113-118.

- **"Safe Delivery Act" -** When a fire department takes in an abandoned baby, and NFIRS 5.0 is the only tracking system, the incident should be coded as follows: Incident Type = 551 and Action Taken = 70.

- **The Arson Module** is allowed for incident types 100-173

- **If used, the EMS Module** is only allowed for Incident Types: 100-243, 311, 321-323, 351-381, 400-431, 451 and 900.

- **The Haz Mat Module** is only allowed for Incident Types: 100-243, 321-323, 371, 400-431, 451. 900.

- **Exposures** - are limited to fire incidents only (not haz mats). The exposure number is a sequential number assigned by the officer in charge to each exposure fire resulting from the original fire. **Enter "000" if the incident is the original fire and not an exposure fire**. The number "001" should be used for the first exposure fire, "002" for the second exposure fire, etc. In a fire involving exposures, **an additional Basic Module must be completed for each exposure.**

  Be sure to mark the exposure fire block for Cause of Ignition for each exposure fire and then skip to Section G.

  The use of the exposure fire is limited to situations where there is actual flame damage. If the adjacent property is damaged due to water, heat, smoke, or fire control, include the damage in the main report (Exposure 000). The owner/occupant information can be captured in the Remarks section or on NFIRS Form 1S, Supplemental Report. Multiple person and entities involved can be documented on this report. The number of buildings involved should be documented in the Fire module, Section B2.

- **If your fire department has "no activity"** for a particular month, it is important that you fill out the "no activity" section of the NFIRS report. This response will indicate your department is actively participating in the NFIRS 5.0 system as mandated by Act 207, P.A. 1941. The incident date should indicate the last day of the month in which your department had "no activity", i.e. 10/31/04.

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